

- **Belmont Warrant Committee Meeting Minutes**

- **FINAL**

- **April 7, 2010, 7:30 p.m.**

- **Chenery Middle School Community Room**

- Present: Chair Curtis; Members Allison, Becker, Callanan, Dash, Epstein, Libenson, Lynch, Manjikian, McLaughlin, Millane, Paolillo, Smith; BOS Chair Jones; School Committee Chair Rittenburg

- Town Administrator Younger, Assistant Town Administrator Conti, Town Accountant Hagg

- Members Absent: Bruschi and Hofmann

- The meeting was called to order at 7:40 pm by Chair Curtis.

- Chair Curtis began by turning to the principle agenda item for the evening: to review the Warrant Articles. He welcomed BOS Chair Jones and congratulated newly-elected Selectman Paolillo.

- ***Discussion of Warrant Articles***

- Chair Curtis: The WC is not opining on Articles 1 and 2.

- Articles 3,4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 will be discussed at the Town Meeting in May (Tuesday, May 25), not at the Town Meeting in April, so they will not be opined on at this time.

- **Article 12: “High School HVAC Bond De-Authorization”**

- Town accountant Hagg noted that the numbers have been changed and that this article will be withdrawn.

- **Article 13: “Cemetery Balance Transfer”**

- This article pertains to the transfer of the ‘lot sales’ account into the ‘perpetual care’ account.

- *Motion:* The WC moved to support Article 13 with favorable action.
- The motion passed unanimously.

- **Article 14: “Delinquent Tax Fee”**

- Chair Curtis asked why the fee was not \$30.00 (as opposed to \$15.00)? Assistant Town Administrator Conti replied that this question has been posed to the Treasurer. Chair Curtis said that the WC would hold off on this for now.

-

- **Article 15: “Minuteman School Feasibility Study”**

-

- Member Paolillo reviewed that Minuteman has authorized borrowing money (\$725K) for a feasibility study which will cost Belmont \$33K in total over several years. Member towns have until June 30 to vote on this. If even one town votes to disapprove, this will be defeated, as they need unanimous support. The total project is estimated at \$90M to rebuild the facility.

-

- The Minuteman study group, Paolillo added, voted against this, and the town needs to explicitly disapprove this. Member McLaughlin said that the WC ought to disapprove this as it proposes to do a feasibility study on something that the town can't afford. Member Becker noted that Minuteman may go ahead with the feasibility study and fund it from their operating budget. BOS Chair Jones commented that there has been a history of talking about this facility not being “right sized.” as it was built for 1000 students and it enrolls 700 (member towns pay to subsidize some of those students). So, we've got a school that is already too big, he said, and this motion makes it bigger.

-

- Member Lynch added that the WC education subcommittee met with Minuteman, discussed the concerns that Chair Jones mentioned, and strongly encourages unfavorable action on this. Chair Curtis summarized the discussion by saying: we can't afford this, the building will become way too big, and we need to send a “No” vote message.

-

- *Motion:* The WC moved *unfavorable* action on Article 15.
- The motion passed unanimously.

-

- **Article 16: “Warrant Committee Reports on Zoning Articles”**

-

- This is a Citizens' Petition. This bylaw, said Chair Curtis, effectively eliminates the WC's ability to express a view ever again. When the WC reports on a zoning law, it needs to articulate how this impacts town finances. The Planning Board goes through a lot of trouble to have meetings and hear public opinion. When they come up with a zoning amendment that is not a good idea from a policy standpoint (Curtis offered two such examples: the banking and barn bylaw), TM members may feel that the WC has overstepped its boundaries. SC Chair Rittenburg said that this is a pushback on WC opining when a Warrant Article is not related to finance; TM should know if a zoning article has an impact on finances. She recommended the WC review Article 19 of the town by-laws. Member McLaughlin said that “impact on finances” is defined too narrowly. Member Dash said he has appreciated having “broader eyes reviewing zoning amendments.” It is helpful, he said, to have a non pro-development perspective.

-

- Chair Curtis said he will continue to explain the WC's position to TM. He said he is not looking for a different process than the one we have now. We will always give our

rationale to TM, he said, including a summary of Article 19. Member Dash said it is good to explain why the WC has jurisdiction over a certain amendment.

-
- *Motion:* The WC moved *unfavorable* action on Article 16.
- The motion passed, with 14 in favor (i.e., of unfavorable action) and one opposed.

-

- **Article 17: “Reports to Town Meeting”**

-

- Mr. Conti explained that this motion establishes a process by which TM members obtain a report on a subject that they are concerned about. Member Allison said that ten TM members can bring any commission or body to its knees by requesting these written reports. Member Epstein noted that this creates a needlessly antagonistic environment and is counter-productive. Member Smith clarified that, under the terms of the proposed article, ten members can put forward a motion before TM to then consider – the request for a report only goes forward if TM approves the motion (i.e., not merely if 10 members put it forward).

-
- *Motion:* The WC moved *unfavorable* action on Article 17.
- The motion passed unanimously.

-

- **Article 18: “Copies of Budget for Town Meeting Members”**

-

- Chair Curtis explained that this motion requests that a copy of the proposed budget be sent out to TM members no less than 21 days prior to TM, and that a copy be provided to the Clerk’s Office and Town Libraries no less than 14 days prior to TM. Many WC members agreed that, while they are in favor of both transparency and having the budget available to TM sooner, the budget is changing constantly, and this article would therefore be onerous, expensive, and won’t result in an accurate budget being distributed in a timely way. Also, the budget is on the town’s website.

- Chair Curtis asked: Will this motion lead to a better budget? We need to get a budget PDF online and adjust it as the budget evolves.

-
- *Motion:* The WC moved *unfavorable* action on Article 18.
- The motion passed with 14 in favor and 1 abstention

-

- **Articles 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27**

-

- The WC took no position on Articles 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 26 and 27.

-

- **Article 21: “Legislative Petition – Restaurant Liquor Licenses”**

-

- Mr. Younger explained the financial implication of this petition, which adjusts the seating requirement numbers of the “all liquor” licenses to allow more licenses to be issued (and under more circumstances). The town could reap \$28K in revenue.

-
- *Motion:* The WC moved favorable action on Article 21.
- The motion passed unanimously.

Article 23: “Quarterly Tax Billing”

-
- *Motion:* The WC moved favorable action on Article 23.
- The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes

-
- The minutes of March 3, 2010 were approved with 2 abstentions.
- The minutes of March 10, 2010 were approved with 2 abstentions.
- The minutes of March 17, 2010 were held off.
- The minutes of March 24, 2010 were held off.
- The minutes of March 31, 2010 were approved with 2 abstentions.

Other

The League of Woman Voters will hold their Warrant Briefing meeting on Thursday, April 22, 2010, at 7:30 pm. Member Allison said that she will be chairing the meeting, and asked anyone who had suggestions as to how to make the meeting as useful as possible to send her suggestions before April 14.

Member Paolillo resigned from the WC, as he was elected this week to the BOS. He thanked the Warrant Committee.

Member McLaughlin moved to adjourn at 9:20 pm.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
WC Recording Secretary